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ABSTRACT

This journal presents the following four papers: "Begin with Beliefs: Exploring the Relationship Between Beliefs and Learner Autonomy Among Advanced Students" (Beverly-Anne Carter); "An Exploratory Comparison of Oral Narrative Styles in Korea and the U.S." (Jungmin Ko); "Rethinking the Red Ink: Audio-Feedback in the ESL Writing Classroom" (Robert Johanson); and "Liar or Truth-Teller? Logic Puzzles in the Foreign-Language Classroom" (Esther Raizen). The journal also includes reviews of three books: "Untangling the Web: St. Martin's Guide to Language and Culture on the Internet" (Carly Blyth); "Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual" (Patrick R. Bennett); and "A Course in Language Teaching: Practice and Theory" (Penny Ur). Finally, the journal presents information on the Texas Foreign Language Education Conference (TexFLEC) 2000. (Papers contain references.) (SM)

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Begin With Beliefs: Exploring the Relationship Between Beliefs and Learner Autonomy Among Advanced Students

BEVERLY-ANNE CARTER

The study of learner beliefs is an area of research that has been attracting considerable attention from researchers and practitioners engaged in promoting learner autonomy. The learners' readiness to assume active roles, as required by autonomous learning, is to some extent determined by the beliefs that they hold about foreign language learning. This paper examines the data elicited by the Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) administered to first-year students in French at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago. It is part of a larger Learner Autonomy Project that seeks to promote and integrate autonomous language learning into the foreign language syllabus at the St. Augustine campus. It looks at the beliefs held by students, as revealed by the BALLI questionnaire, and discusses the validity of these beliefs and how they are likely to facilitate or hinder the shift to a more autonomous mode of language learning.

INTRODUCTION

The Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) (Horwitz, 1988) was administered to advanced learners of French as the first phase of an intervention to promote learner autonomy. The aim of the present study was to use the BALLI to discover the beliefs about language and language learning held by language majors and minors on their entry into the degree program at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago.

A survey conducted at the beginning of their tertiary level study was likely to reveal the beliefs that students brought to the program, beliefs that might facilitate or constrain the promotion of autonomy. Learner autonomy was considered to be an important goal of the French language program, for the dual approach of content learning and learning how to learn, as advocated in autonomous approaches, was one that was critically important to these undergraduates who were embarking on the final phase of their language learning in an institutional setting. Their need to develop both metacognitive and cognitive strategies in order

to maximize present learning opportunities and to continue lifelong learning could not be overemphasized.

While the larger Learner Autonomy Project adopted a qualitative approach to record the process of shifting learners to a more self-directed way of learning, the use of the BALLI in this study enabled the teacher-researcher to take a "snapshot" of learner beliefs at a particular point in time. The strength of the instrument to capture the major beliefs among a group of learners is nonetheless balanced by an obvious limitation: namely, the validity problems inherent in questionnaire techniques (Christison and Krahnke, 1986). In a closed questionnaire, the answers selected by the subjects hinge on their interpretation of the categories; however, it is difficult for the researcher to probe further to verify meaning while administering the instrument. It is important to note that in this instance a preliminary analysis of the qualitative data—learner autobiographies and learner journals—seemed to support the data elicited by the BALLI.

The paper begins with a discussion of learner beliefs in the context of approaches to autonomy and briefly reviews the BALLI questionnaire and its use as the instrument in the study. Next, the paper analyzes the data obtained from the questionnaire and compares them to current research findings and, where appropriate, to the responses given by the subjects in the Horwitz (1988) study. The paper concludes by looking at the implications of the findings for the Learner Autonomy Project and for other projects where teachers aim to help students adopt a more reflective and autonomous approach to their learning.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Foreign language pedagogy is now able to draw on the growing number of studies that focus on the differences that learners bring to their language learning (Grotjahn, 1991). Studies on individual differences, motivation, and learner beliefs have all provided important insights into some hidden areas of the learner's affective background. The salience of learner beliefs to their language learning, for example, has been documented in several recent research studies (Wenden, 1987; Ho and Crookhall, 1995; Press, 1996; Cotterall, 1995; Broady, 1996). In her study conducted among ESL students, Wenden focused on the relationship between learner beliefs and strategy use, while, more recently, studies conducted by Ho & Crookhall and by Press looked at the question of ethnicity in relation to learner beliefs. Cotterall and Broady both examined learner beliefs in relation to autonomy.

Empirical data showing that learners' beliefs might influence

their potential for autonomy (see Cotterall, 1995) confirmed previous findings on the link between learner beliefs and learner autonomy. Wenden (1987), in making explicit the link between beliefs and autonomy, maintained that it was important to know learners' beliefs and strategies to determine the necessity of strategy training to help them self-direct their learning. Brown (1987), although not adopting an autonomy framework, also pointed to the role of affective factors in the acquisition of second or foreign languages.

> Understanding how human beings feel and respond and believe and value is an exceedingly important aspect of a theory of second language acquisition. (p. 101)

Researchers who advocate a learner-centered approach have given similar prominence to the role of learner beliefs in their theories of learning. According to Lambert and McCombs (1997), the first premise of the learner-centered model is that

> Learners have distinctive perspectives or frames of reference, contributed to by their history, their environment, their interests and goals, their beliefs, their ways of thinking, and the like. These must be attended to and respected if learners are to engage in and take responsibility for their own learning. (p. 9)

The similarities between autonomous approaches and learner-centered approaches extend to the learners' beliefs about the assumption of responsibility for their own learning. The learners' "representation" of their role in language learning is a factor that must be considered by proponents of learner autonomy. Holec (1980) argues that it might undermine the whole shift to autonomy if this were ignored, because the learner

> has very clear ideas of what a language is, what learning a language means, [and] of the respective roles of teacher and learner . . . (p. 41)

Littlewood (1998) contends that in spite of the variety of definitions of autonomy, they all have several central features, principally

> Students should take responsibility for their own learning. This is both because all learning can in any case only be carried out by students themselves and also because they need to develop the ability to continue learning after the end of their formal education. (p. 71)

Littlewood's viewpoint that the assumption of individual responsibility is a core feature of autonomy is reflected in Benson (1997), who defines autonomy as

> a capacity—a construct of attitudes and abilities—which

> allows learners to take more responsibility for their learning. (p. 19)

Boud (1988, cited in Cotterall, 1995, p. 195) is another researcher who stresses the importance of individual responsibility.

> The main characteristic of autonomy as an approach to learning is that students take some significant responsibility for their own learning over and above responding to instruction.

These researchers seem to suggest that success in learning (and this applies both to the younger and the more mature student) must be grounded in learners' active participation in the task of learning if learners are to become successful in their classroom-based foreign language learning. In other words, they are to become "active, goal-directed, self-regulating, and assume personal responsibility for contributing to their own learning" (Lambert and McCombs, 1998, p. 16). If foreign language teaching is to provide learners with not only content instruction but also knowledge of how to become a better and more successful language learner, then a good place to start is with a better understanding of what our learners believe.

THE STUDY

This study, which used the BALLI in the context of a French as a foreign language classroom, first sought to analyze the beliefs of advanced learners in the light of recent L2 research and to compare the beliefs of the advanced learners in this study with the novice learners in the Horwitz (1988) study. Given the small number of participants, no generalizations beyond the context of this study can be made to other groups of advanced learners of French. (See Appendix A for a copy of the Learner Autonomy handout given to students.)

The Instrument

Horwitz developed the BALLI in order to assess student beliefs on a number of topics related to language learning. The inventory was initially developed out of free-recall protocols of English as a Second Language (ESL) and Foreign Language (EFL) teacher educators and student-and-teacher focus groups in the United States (see Horwitz, 1988, for a fuller description of the research method). Horwitz subsequently refined the inventory to produce the final inventory of 34 items. Horwitz (1988) and Moore (1997) warn of one of the limitations of the instrument: Given the specific cultural context in which it was developed, it might prove to be of limited applicability in other cultural contexts.

Thirty of the 34 BALLI items were used in this study. The items omitted, Items 12, 18, and 21, were

felt to be less important for the purpose of our study. Item 15 of the original BALLI questionnaire was used in a subsequent open-ended questionnaire. There was also some rewording of the items to make them more culturally appropriate in terms of expression and standard British spelling. These changes, it is felt, did not affect in any significant way the data elicited, so that the study produced clusters of beliefs relating to the following categories: difficulty of language learning, foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning and communication strategies, and motivation, as in the Horwitz study. Twenty-six of the 30 items used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strong agreement (1) to strong disagreement (5), with each statement. Two items elicited student ratings (the difficulty level of the L2 and the amount of time needed to learn a foreign language), while two items (an example of a language that is easy to learn and an example of a language that is difficult to learn) were open-ended. See Appendix A for the questionnaire.

The Subjects

The subjects in this study, first-year undergraduates in French, belonged to one of three groups (two day groups and one evening group) enrolled in the first-year, first-semester course F14A at the University of the West Indies, St. Augustine, Trinidad and Tobago, in 1997/8. The students were advanced learners who had had at least 7 years (approximately 500 contact hours) of prior instruction in French and Spanish at the secondary level.

Like their peers throughout the English-speaking Caribbean, these high school graduates gained admittance to the University of the West Indies on the basis of their Cambridge Advanced Level Examinations (in French and at least one other subject). The international examination is administered by the local Ministry of Education on behalf of the Cambridge Overseas Syndicate. Certification at the advanced level by the English-based board meets the matriculation requirements for the University of the West Indies.

Of the 38 students enrolled in the course, 35 (33 females and 2 males) completed the BALLI questionnaire. Six of the respondents were French majors, but one-half of the respondents were French/Spanish double majors (N=18). The remainder were majors in other Liberal Arts programs (Spanish, History, Linguistics, and Visual Arts). The respondents were between 17 and 45 years old.

Procedure

Although there was no focused discussion on learner beliefs before the BALLI questionnaires were distributed in class, the teacher-researcher did introduce

the topic of learner autonomy, and the class was given a handout explaining the general aims and objectives of the Learner Autonomy Project. The BALLI questionnaires were then distributed during class in Week 7 of the semester, 1 week after the midsemester test. An introductory page explained the rationale behind the questionnaire and gave instructions for its completion. The average time taken to complete the questionnaire was about 20 minutes. In the remaining 30 or so minutes of instructional time, normal teaching/learning activities resumed. The same procedure was used in each of the three groups.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Difficulty of Language Learning

The items in this section address the difficulty of language learning in general, as well as any perceptions about the degree of difficulty of any named target language.

According to the responses given, 89% of the subjects either strongly agreed or agreed that there exists a language-learning hierarchy of difficulty (Item 3). Many languages, including German, Japanese, Finnish, and French, were cited as languages that are difficult to learn (Item 4). While only one student found French to be a very difficult language, 15 students, or 45% of the population, found that French was a difficult language, and an equal number considered it to be a language of medium difficulty (Item 6). No student felt that French was a very easy language. Two students gave no response to this item.

When asked to give an example of a language that was easy to learn, only one student suggested French, although, significantly, slightly more than half of the students (51%) said that Spanish was easy (Item 5). What these figures suggest is that these students, while not unwilling to enroll for a course of advanced French language study, nonetheless perceived that their task would be a difficult one, certainly more difficult than learning Spanish, the foreign language of choice at both the secondary and tertiary level. Interestingly though, notwithstanding the perceived difficulty of French, 86% of these advanced learners strongly agreed or agreed that they would ultimately learn to speak French very well (Item 30).

Students were also asked to report on the difficulty of individual skills. Only 14% agreed that it was easier to speak than to understand (Item 17); however, 83% agreed that it was easier to read than to write in the L2 (Item 22). Clearly, then, these students accepted the traditional divide between productive skills (speaking and writing), regarded as being more demanding, and the easier,

receptive skills of listening and reading.

There are mixed views in the literature about whether the distinctions easy/difficult and receptive/productive can be so sharply made. Recent research (Carrell, 1984; Dunkel, 1986; Nagle and Sanders, 1986; Weissenrieder, 1987; Grabe, 1991) has been challenging the long-held view that comprehension is an easy, passive activity, one that requires minimal attention and thus demands minimal practice by foreign language learners. Furthermore, in the case of these students, contrary to their stated belief about the ease of comprehension, classroom test results point to persistent difficulties among them, particularly in listening comprehension. It is possible that the students' beliefs about listening and reading led them to underestimate the effort needed to improve in listening and reading.

This perceived difference in difficulty might offer one explanation why listening and reading material provided for self-access study was so seldom used by the students. While the F14A teachers' perceptions of the students' weaknesses in listening and reading led them to provide self-access material for independent work on these two skills, the students' reluctance to pay further attention to listening and reading might stem in part from their beliefs about the lesser difficulty of the receptive skills. Interestingly, the students again expressed the opinion that they found writing and speaking more difficult than listening and reading in their course evaluations. The link between the students' beliefs and their lack of willingness to assume more responsibility for listening and reading is one issue that an intervention to promote autonomy might fruitfully address.

One area of considerable discrepancy between the Horwitz (1988) study and the group of advanced learners in this study was with respect to Item 29, which asked students to quantify the length of time needed to achieve mastery in French. Thirty out of 35 respondents, or 86%, felt that the length of time needed to learn a foreign language depended on the language and the person. This response contrasted sharply with those obtained in the Horwitz survey. In Horwitz, 38 beginning French students (N=97), or 39 %, felt that 1 hour a day of language learning would result in a high level of fluency after only 1 or 2 years. This time requirement was strongly rejected by the St. Augustine students. Only one student, 3% of the population surveyed, shared this view. Similarly, while 34 students, or 35% of the Horwitz sample, felt that it would take a learner 3 to 5 years to become fluent, only two students in this sample (6%) concurred. Importantly, although these students had a minimum of 7 years of foreign

language instruction, only one student (3%) felt that fluency could be achieved in 5 to 10 years.

The fact that the St. Augustine students saw language learning as an open-ended undertaking, with the length of time needed for fluency being an individual variable, suggests that the beliefs of these advanced learners, on this point, at least, are closer to the views held by language experts, many of whom consider language learning to be a life-long endeavor. Thus, we might hypothesize that the greater linguistic maturity of the St. Augustine sample reveals itself in a better awareness of the time necessary to achieve fluency in the target language. Without wishing to extrapolate too much from this single example, the author nonetheless suggests that some of the learners' naive beliefs about language learning can be modified through greater experience or awareness.

Foreign Language Aptitude

This cluster of items informs us whether students think that there is equal potential for achieving proficiency in L2 learning broadly distributed among the population in general or that particular learners are likely to be more successful than others, due to factors such as special language ability (Item 2), intelligence (Items 23 and 25), and gender (Item 16).

It is very positive to note, for example, that although the St. Augustine sample seems to appreciate the tenacity required to achieve mastery in a foreign language, their outlook is a very optimistic one, with 92% agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement that everyone can learn a foreign language. This answer seems to suggest that, in the view of the students, the capacity to acquire a second language, like the capacity to acquire a first language, is present in all human beings. This belief certainly seems to be true. In fact, in spite of the difficulty of classroom-based acquisition, particularly in foreign language contexts, more of the world's speakers are thought to be bilinguals rather than monolinguals (Cook, 1993).

When the students were asked to explore the subject further and asked whether some people are born with a special ability which helps them to learn a foreign language (Item 2), more than half of the students, 66%, firmly believed (strongly agreed or agreed) this to be so. This perception that proficiency in foreign language learning is somehow a gift or a special talent is fairly widespread in the general population. Likewise, in the students' minds, language proficiency seems to be linked more with aptitude, the "specific cognitive qualities needed for SLA" (Ellis, 1985, p. 110), than with general intelligence.

Yet there seems to be no consensus about the link between in-

telligence and aptitude. Roughly equal percentages appeared across the range of the scale in response to the following statement: "People who speak more than one language are very intelligent" (Item 25); 35 percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 32 percent neither agreed nor disagreed, and 32 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The relationship between gender and language proficiency was not an area of beliefs that seemed to have been given much prior consideration by the students. Although only 2 of the 35 respondents were male (a reflection of the general trend in a society where language learning on the whole, and French learning in particular, are seen as female activities) and in spite of the fact that a number of researchers have underscored the differential use of strategies in relation to successful L2 learning among male and female learners, (Ehrman and Oxford, 1989; Bacon and Finnemann, 1992; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990), only 14% of the students felt that women learn a language easier than men.

The subjects were also asked to indicate their opinion about language learning in their country. The data elicited proved to be very revealing about the students' judgments about the state of language learning in Trinidad and Tobago. In stark contrast to the 92% who felt that everyone could learn a foreign language (Item 27), 69% expressed neutrality (neither agreed nor disagreed) when asked whether people in their country are good at learning foreign languages (Item 26). While this expression of neutrality might simply be a case of prudence on the part of the students who were hesitant to interpret "good at learning foreign languages," it is interesting to note that 69% of the population sampled disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement in Item 24, "People in Trinidad and Tobago place a lot of importance on learning foreign languages."

Even though the students' own self-esteem as language learners was very clear, with 86% believing that they will ultimately learn to speak French very well, the influence of the community at large—generally perceived as not gifted for language learning, even uninterested in language learning, and in short unsupportive of the demands of language learning—cannot be discounted in a study on the beliefs of undergraduate students. Richards and Lockhart (1994), in a discussion on learner belief systems, make reference to a study conducted by Tumposky (1991) to support the view that

> learners' beliefs are influenced by the social context of learning and can influence both their attitude toward the language itself as well as toward language learning in general. (p. 52)

Tudor (1996) expands on the importance of the context on language learning in the following terms:

> Language learners . . . are not disincarnate spirits studying in a social vacuum . . . they are also members of a given sociocultural community, and their membership of this community is an integral part of their identity. . . . Their language study will be conducted within an educational framework which is shaped by the socioeconomic conditions of their home community and which will also reflect the attitudes, beliefs and conditions of this community. Contextual factors of this nature play a significant role in creating the learning environment in which language study will occur. (p. 128)

The Nature of Language Learning and Learning and Communication Strategies

The third and fourth categories of beliefs in the BALLI seek to ascertain the beliefs that learners hold about the nature of language learning and the kinds of learning and communication strategies that learners value. Since both these categories address similar issues, they will be treated together in this discussion.

The majority of students felt that it was better to learn the L2 in the country where it is spoken (Item 11). The fact that 89% of the students held this view should come as no surprise, since all but two of them had learned the L2 through a Communicative Language Teaching Approach where the focus had been on using language with French-speaking Caribbean people. Their communicative orientation perhaps explains why they assigned a very important role to vocabulary, and thus a rather minor role to grammar. In this study, 69% agreed or strongly agreed that vocabulary was the most important part of learning a foreign language (Item 13) and 72% disagreed with the statement that learning another language was mostly a matter of learning grammar rules (Item 20). Their communicative mindset can perhaps also be given as an explanation why 51% of those surveyed did not mind guessing when confronted with new words (Item 12), why only 23% felt that they should not say anything if they could not say it correctly (Item 9), why 94% saw the need for practicing to achieve fluency as a speaker of French (Item 14), and why 80% thought it was important to speak French with an excellent accent (Item 7).

The students' beliefs about vocabulary and grammar relate to one of the most controversial areas in the Communicative Language Teaching Approach. Earlier approaches to Communicative Language Teaching came into

prominence at a time when, according to McDonough and Shaw (1993), "structural design criteria started to receive widespread critical attention" (p. 22). The traditional focus on grammar or form shifted to a focus on meaning in keeping with the trend of the time that valued the meaning potential in L2 learning. As Maiguascha (1993, cited in Lessard-Clouston, 1996) in discussing the "marginal or ancillary role" (p. 24) played by vocabulary, states,

> The underlying assumption was that words and their meanings did not need to be taught explicitly since, it was claimed, learners will "pick up" vocabulary indirectly while engaged in grammatical and communicative activities or while reading. In short, lexical learning was seen as taking place automatically or unconsciously, as a cumulative by-product of other linguistic learning. (p. 24)

Grabe (1995) underscores the central role played by vocabulary when he states that "a large vocabulary is critical not only for reading but also for all L2 language skills, for academic performance, and for related background knowledge" (p. 3). A similar role is recognized for vocabulary in oral proficiency, according to Dickson (1996), who refers to an "internal survey" in which 66% of first-year students, and 58% of second- and third-year students cited their deficiencies in vocabulary as their main difficulty in oral expression.

Nonetheless, Kara (1993), in a classroom-based study of French language learners, reported that students wanted first grammar, then conversation, vocabulary, and finally translation. Davidheiser (1996) argued that because of the poor grammar mastery in their L1, "the teaching of grammar to American students of second languages seems difficult at best" and continued by pointing to the need for explicit grammar teaching to stem the "prolific mistakes in advanced courses" (p. 271). While Davidheiser examined students' perceptions and difficulties with grammar, Celce-Murcia (1991, cited in Manley, 1997) attributed some of the present dilemma surrounding grammar teaching to doubts among communicative language advocates about the utility of explicit grammar teaching:

> Among the proponents of this approach, there is currently some debate regarding the nature, extent, and type of grammar instruction or grammar awareness activities appropriate for second or foreign language learning as well as a certain ambivalence about issues as to whether, when, and how teachers should correct grammatical errors. (p. 73)

As these research studies have shown, there is ample evidence to support a major role for

vocabulary and grammar in language learning. In the context of learner autonomy and learner beliefs, the weight of one or the other in an instructional program often depends on their comparative usefulness in the eyes of the teacher and the learners. Gu (1996) perhaps summed up this contentious issue best when she wrote

> Students seemed to have their diverse criteria as to what was helpful or not helpful in the classroom. Those who believed that correctness and grammar should be the focus of instruction judged an activity by whether or not it involved some error correction or grammar learning. (p. 38)

By exploring their beliefs about language learning, students should become aware that a focus on grammar and a focus on vocabulary and meaning both share center stage in communicative approaches to language learning. Later approaches that emphasize a focus on form or on language awareness are simply endorsing a view expressed by Wilkins (1974) more than two decades ago, when he said he recognized the importance of grammar as a vehicle for communicative competence. Learner beliefs will therefore need to be modified if they are seen to reflect too reductionist a view of the kinds of activities that belong in the post-communicative classroom.

Motivation

The final cluster of answers to the BALLI sought to determine what opportunities students associated with learning a foreign language.

Whereas over half of the students (63%) felt that successful communication with native speakers was dependent on their ability to speak the language (Item 28), indicating an integrative need for foreign language learning, only 9%, or 3 out of 35 students, felt an instrumental need (Item 19). The latter group agreed that if they spoke French well it would help them get a job. Students' motivation in language learning, which lies at the core of a complex of affective factors, is something that practitioners considering an autonomous approach should be aware of. So much of L2 teaching at the present time in Trinidad and Tobago is premised on the notion that language teaching must emphasize the utilitarian. Yet, the evidence in the learners' responses to BALLI Items 19 and 28, which shows that only 9% of the learners endorse this view, should compel practitioners to reexamine this premise for classroom teaching.

IMPLICATIONS OF LEARNER BELIEFS FOR AN AUTONOMOUS APPROACH: FROM BELIEFS TO AUTONOMY

The evidence is clear that learners in this study hold beliefs

that inform their attitudes towards foreign language learning. What then must be the next step in the promotion of autonomy? Raising student and teacher awareness about the existence of the above-mentioned beliefs should only be the initial stage in the promotion of autonomy. A second stage must seek to confirm those beliefs that might foster autonomy and change those beliefs that might prove deleterious to the promotion of autonomy. Accordingly, this section of the paper reviews the passage from erroneous beliefs to autonomy, with reference to three of the categories discussed in the BALLI: the difficulty of language learning (Category 1), foreign language aptitude (Category 2), and the nature of language learning (Category 3).

Little's (1991) reminder that autonomy "presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the content and process of his learning" (p. 4) offers a clue about how autonomy must be facilitated. Holec (1981), on the other hand, addresses the issue more squarely when he contends that autonomy is developmental, a "gradual process of acquiring," and that teachers will need to help learners free themselves from habits acquired in their past learning, while supporting their efforts to assume full responsibility for their learning.

Regarding the first category of beliefs, those pertaining to the difficulty of language learning, two options can be easily pursued to counter the beliefs held by the learners. First, students could be given strategic instructions to help them master those skills that they find most difficult. Learners who might lack the skills and strategies to communicate effectively would no doubt benefit from specific guidelines on how to improve their oral production. Such skills and strategies include the ability to paraphrase when faced with insufficient vocabulary, the communication strategies to keep a conversation going, and the ability to overcome any other performance difficulties that arise when interacting with native or other L2 speakers.

Another way in which the learning-to-learn focus of autonomy might be promoted is by helping these advanced learners to explore their belief that the productive skills are more challenging than the receptive skills. A clearer understanding of the role played by anxiety in language learning might allow learners to step back and analyze whether their beliefs about the ease or difficulty of different skills are in any way linked to the stress they feel when called upon to produce the target language, as opposed to responding to aural or written input.

In the category about beliefs about foreign language aptitude,

it might be a welcome boost to these advanced students to learn that there is mixed evidence on the superiority of child versus adult learners. Although there is strong support that children are more proficient at developing accents that are nearer to native-speaker accents, there is little conclusive evidence that, globally, children learn a foreign language better than adults. However, the importance of native-like accents for these learners cannot be discounted, since there is an overwhelming belief among them that it is important to speak French with a near-native accent.

While these advanced learners have clearly understood that translating from their L1 to the target language is not the most efficient way to attain foreign language proficiency (a belief dealt with under the category of the nature of language learning), their beliefs about the relationship of grammar and vocabulary to foreign language proficiency is some cause for concern. Whereas fluency might be a sufficient goal in contexts where French is learned for survival purposes, language majors should be more aware of the role played by grammar in increasing foreign language proficiency. It is possible to concede that even very proficient L2 speakers might contest the statement that learning another language is mostly a matter of learning grammar rules and that what is at issue here is not the students' perceptions, but a weak item in the questionnaire. On the other hand, anecdotal evidence, as well as course evaluation questionnaires, point to a deeply-held belief among many students that fluency is most important and accuracy secondary. Truly autonomous learners might not only hold to the belief of the primary importance of learning grammar rules, but also appreciate how irritating the lack of accuracy is to the educated native speaker of French and how important accuracy might be for the student wishing to make a career in a field that requires linguistic competence.

Moving learners from erroneous beliefs to autonomy must be a gradual process. If learners are to change their beliefs about what constitutes foreign language learning, their role in learning, and the most efficient way of learning, the fundamental changes cannot be the work of a lecture or two on autonomy, but a long-term process fully integrated into the range of skill acquisition during class activities.

CONCLUSION

In investigating the beliefs held by the subjects, advanced students of French as a foreign language, this study revealed some fairly accurate and some ill-founded beliefs. It is the author's contention that the presence of these beliefs needs to be under-

stood and analyzed carefully if these learners are to be helped to achieve their full potential as advanced foreign languages learners.

Helping learners to reject their ill-founded beliefs about language and language learning and helping them not only to learn the target language but also to learn how to learn their L2—in short, helping them to become autonomous language learners—are fitting objectives at any level of instruction. An autonomous approach to foreign language learning is, to our mind, a useful framework to adopt at any level of instruction, but is particularly appropriate for the college level students in this study. The route to autonomy suggested in this paper could prove invaluable for these advanced learners who need every input to help them refine the skills necessary to achieve continued future foreign language success.

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APPENDIX A

(In the tables below, bold numbers indicate number of respondents in each category. The Likert scale ranges from 1=strongly agree to 5=strongly disagree)

THE DIFFICULTY OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
3. Some languages are easier to learn than others.	**15**	**16**	**3**	**1**	**0**	
4. Give an example of a language that you think is difficult to learn____						
5. Give an example of a language that is easy to learn ____						
6. French is: i) a very difficult language, ii) a difficult language, iii) a language of medium difficulty, iv) an easy language, v) a very easy language to learn.	**1**	**15**	**15**	**2**	**0**	**2**
17. It is easier to speak than to understand a foreign language.	**1**	**4**	**11**	**11**	**8**	
22. It is easier to develop reading skills than writing skills in a foreign language.	**7**	**22**	**2**	**4**	**0**	
29. If someone spent one hour a day learning a language, how long would it take him/her to become fluent? i) less than a year ii) 1-2 years iii) 3-5 years iv) 5-10years v) it depends on the language and the person.	**1**	**1**	**2**	**1**	**30**	
30. I believe that I will ultimately learn to speak French very well.	**25**	**5**	**3**	**0**	**2**	

FOREIGN LANGUAGE APTITUDE

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
1. It is easier for children than adults to learn a foreign language.	**13**	**14**	**6**	**1**	**1**	
2. Some people are born with a special ability which helps them to learn a foreign language.	**9**	**14**	**6**	**5**	**1**	
10. It is easier for someone who already speaks a foreign language to learn another one.	**7**	**12**	**8**	**5**	**3**	
16. Women learn a language easier than men.	**1**	**4**	**18**	**8**	**4**	
23. People who are good at mathematics or science are not good in foreign languages.	**0**	**4**	**8**	**12**	**10**	**1**
25. People who speak more than one language are very intelligent.	**3**	**9**	**11**	**6**	**5**	**1**
26. People in Trinidad and Tobago are good at learning foreign languages.	**0**	**8**	**24**	**3**	**0**	
27. Everyone can learn a foreign language.	**12**	**20**	**2**	**1**	**0**	

THE NATURE OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
8. It is necessary to know about France and francophone culture in order to speak French.	**3**	**15**	**6**	**11**	**0**	
11. It is better to learn French in a French-speaking country.	**24**	**7**	**2**	**2**	**0**	
13. The most important part of learning a foreign language is learning vocabulary.	**12**	**12**	**4**	**4**	**3**	
18. Learning a foreign language is different from learning other academic subjects.	**20**	**10**	**3**	**1**	**1**	
20. Learning another language is mostly a matter of learning grammar rules.	**1**	**6**	**2**	**22**	**4**	
21. The most important part of learning French is learning how to translate from English.	**0**	**2**	**1**	**20**	**11**	**1**

LEARNING AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
7. It is important to speak French with an excellent accent.	**12**	**16**	**3**	**4**	**0**	
9. You shouldn't say anything in French unless you can say it correctly.	**6**	**2**	**0**	**19**	**8**	
12. It is OK to guess if you don't know a word in French.	**1**	**17**	**7**	**6**	**4**	
14. It is important to practice a lot in order to become a fluent speaker of French.	**33**	**2**	**0**	**0**	**0**	
15. If you are allowed to get away with mistakes in the early stages it will be hard to get rid of them later.	**24**	**8**	**2**	**0**	**1**	

MOTIVATION

	1	2	3	4	5	N/A
19. If students learn to speak French very well, it will help them get a job.	**1**	**10**	**16**	**5**	**3**	
24. People in Trinidad and Tobago place a lot of importance on learning foreign languages.	**1**	**2**	**8**	**14**	**10**	
28. It is necessary to speak their language in order to communicate successfully with native speakers.	**7**	**15**	**7**	**6**	**0**	

An Exploratory Comparison of Oral Narrative Styles in Korea and the U. S.

JUNGMIN KO

This exploratory study compares the narratives of three Korean speakers living in the United States with those of two native English speakers. The subjects viewed the film The Red Balloon *and were given three tasks: to recount the events in the movie, to describe what they would relate to their friends about the movie, and to describe what they saw as they simultaneously watched the movie a second time. The study shows that the subjects interpreted and reproduced narratives from different genres in different ways; within any given genre, however, the native and nonnative speakers responded similarly. Exceptions include conventionalized ways of opening and closing a narrative, tense usage, narrative length, and the handling of culturally significant lexical items. In addition, nonnative speakers spent more time organizing their thoughts and used metacognitive processing actively to plan what they could say and to minimize errors.*

INTRODUCTION

Language is the product of culture, and each cultural group has its own conventionalized ways of speaking. Over time, these ways of speaking change for various reasons, even within a single language group. One analytical method for examining these patterns of speaking and their changes is the analysis of narratives within the culture.

Several researchers have made important contributions to narrative analysis. Tannen (1980), for example, studied the relationship between culture and patterns of narratives. She investigated how members of different cultures transformed the same series of events into different narratives. Specifically, she compared how two language groups, Americans and Greeks, recounted the story of a film. Her research was based on the assumptions that culture influences narration and that language groups have conventionalized ways of telling stories.

Hicks (1991) investigated different genres of narrative productions, including sportscasts, news reports, and stories. Hicks assumed that we become aware of different genres early in childhood. Because children interact with other people in many different social settings, they soon learn how to adapt their language to different conventionalized ways of speaking and presenting knowledge.

Dechert (1983) studied the cognitive operations used by a German second language learner narrating in the target language, English. According to Dechert, second language learners use both the L1 and L2 to activate metacognitive processing to plan what they are going to say. Such learners make use of "islands of reliability." Islands of reliability refer to phrases or sentences that the narrators can produce fluently and smoothly without hesitating, filling in pauses with um's, drawing out the length of words, or correcting themselves. Too high a processing load in a short time, however, causes second language learners to make errors at lexical and syntactic levels. In general, Dechert says that planning and telling a story are both a top-down and bottom-up, that is, a multidirectional process.

This exploratory study compares the narratives of three Korean speakers with those of two English speakers. Its goal is to answer or find approaches to answering the following questions:

i. Do subjects develop their narratives differently by task?
ii. Do language groups interpret narrative tasks differently?
iii. Do language groups have their own conventionalized ways of narrating?
iv. What kinds of strategies do nonnative speakers, in this case, Koreans, use when telling a narrative in English?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Five subjects (four women and one man) participated in this study: Sarah, Rose, Junyi, Yongsik, and Miyeon. Sarah and Rose are native English speakers. Sarah is a sophomore in Art History at the University of Texas at Austin (UT). She is a Caucasian female from a middle-class family. Rose, who has a master's degree in English, is taking courses at UT for her teaching certificate. She is a female African-American from a middle-class family. Junyi, a freshman in Chemistry at UT, is a Korean female who came to the U.S. 6 years ago. Junyi spent her adolescent years in the U.S. Yongsik, a doctoral student at UT, is a Korean male who came to the U.S. 8 years ago. He possesses a high level of English-speaking proficiency. Miyeon graduated from a college in Korea and came to the U.S. with her husband in 1997. She is taking ESL courses at UT. She has some problems expressing herself in English.

Material

The film used in this research is *The Red Balloon*, the same film used in Hicks' study. While Hicks used a shortened version of the film (15 minutes), this study

used the full version (34 minutes). The movie was produced in 1956 in France and won an Academy Award for Best Short Film. The movie has no spoken dialogue. The reason for using a silent film in this study was to eliminate potential confounding factors, such as the variability in levels of listening comprehension among the subjects and the effects of oral input on the subjects' interpretation and hence reproduction of narratives. A silent movie, moreover, imparts its meaning almost entirely by visual means, so that viewers are more likely to come away with an interpretation that more closely reflects their underlying ways of thinking.

The plot of the movie is simple. A young French boy makes friends with a red balloon, which joins the little boy as he goes to school and follows him throughout the day. A gang of other boys becomes jealous of the friendship between the two, until finally some gang members take the balloon away from the boy and pop it. At that point, all the balloons in Paris come to the boy and carry him into the sky.

Procedure

This study was conducted November 20-27, 1998, at UT. After viewing the film, subjects were given three tasks:

i. Respond to the question, "What happened in the movie?" This question was used in the Tannen (1980) study.
ii. Respond to the question, "What would you tell your friends who have not seen the movie?"
iii. Narrate the film as they watched the first 2 minutes a second time.

The Korean subjects were asked to narrate in Korean first and then in English. Their narration was audiotaped and transcribed.

Analysis

The data analysis was based on Tannen's research in which she identified the following variables of narration: maintenance of film perspective, descriptions of action, interpretation of events, interpretative naming, interpretative omission, attribution of causality, philosophizing/personalizing, and stylistic variation. Of those variables, this study borrowed maintenance of film perspective, descriptions of action (with a focus on verb tenses used in the narratives), interpretative naming, interpretative omission, and personalizing. This study found few interesting phenomena regarding interpretation of events, attribution of causality, and stylistic variation, so those variables were disregarded. Moreover, in this study, *personalizing* is defined as describing the balloon in terms

ordinarily used in describing a person; in contrast, Tannen defines personalizing as adopting an ethical point of view. For analyzing the responses to the questions, the study made use of the interpretative methods from Hicks (1991), while adopting Dechert's (1983) characterizations of the strategies used by second language learners. Finally, in its analysis of the subjects' interpretations, the study uses the category of maintenance of film perspective, as discussed in Tannen's study.

RESULTS

Verb Tenses Used in Narratives

Both of the native English speakers, Sarah and Rose, used the present tense throughout their responses to Questions 1 and 3. This observation coincides with Tannen's finding that native speakers exhibited a strong tendency to couch their narratives in the present tense. On the other hand, two of the three Korean speakers, excluding Yongsik, used the past tense in responding to Questions 1 and 3, both in their Korean and English language responses. Yongsik went back and forth between the past tense and the present tense in Korean, but used the present tense predominately in English.

Interpretative Naming

Certain lexical items in the speakers' narratives seemed to convey culture-specific information. For example, in Question 3, the on-line task, Yongsik and Junyi initially used "a dog," rather than "a cat," in their narration. Clearly, however, the animal in the scene is a cat, not a dog. Eventually, both of subjects corrected the phrase "a dog" to "a cat."

Junyi. *A boy was on the way to school and then he sees little dog. And then he goes down to stairs. He still wants to play with* [a little bit hesitatingly] *a little cat, I think.*

Yongsik. *There's a dog, a little puppy. Oh! Actually it looks like a cat. So the boy is playing with a dog or a cat. I'm not sure.*

The source of this temporary confusion appears to be cultural. In Korea, a cat is considered a cunning animal, and its only domestic purpose is to catch rats; they are never seen as pets. Hence, Koreans find it difficult to imagine that a student might stop to pet a cat on the way to school.

The Koreans Junyi and Miyeon referred to the woman who stayed with the boy as his "mother." The native English speaker Sarah, however, described her as his grandmother.

Junyi. *When he finally got home, his mother threw it away.*

Miyeon. *He go home with red balloon and his mother didn't like the red balloon.*

Sarah. *When he finally gets home, his grandmother doesn't let him keep the balloon.*

Since the woman's relationship to the boy was not entirely clear in the movie, this scene was good for drawing out the speakers' unconscious thoughts. The Koreans tended to think of the woman as the boy's mother. A close look at the scene, however, reveals that the woman is much older than the boy's mother could be expected to be. Sarah appears to be right.

Interpretive Omission

The narratives by Korean speakers, both in English and in Korean, were shorter than those produced by native English speakers. Korean speakers tended to omit information that did not contribute to the theme. On the other hand, Americans tended to mention all the elements in a sequence of events.

Personalizing

Four of the subjects with the exception of Junyi personalized the red balloon. Sarah used the words "friends" and "person." Rose used the words "friends" and "pets." Yongsik used "friends."

Sarah. *The balloon is like a person. He becomes very good friends with it.*

Rose. *It seems to be almost like a pet. It's his friend.*

Yongsik. *They became friend each other.*

Miyeon's data were especially interesting. Miyeon described the balloon as "like a human" in English and "like [a] ghost" in Korean. In the Korean culture, the word "ghost" refers to some inexplicable phenomenon.

Interpretation of Each Question

Responses to Question 1: "What happened in the movie?"

Four subjects (not including Yonsik) tended to understand this question as a memory task. They tried to recall the story accurately and chronologically. Only Yongsik did not understand the question as calling for accurate recall; instead, he narrated only the main points of the story.

Unlike Tannen's (1980) results, in which native speakers of English narrated another silent movie, *The Pear Stories*, from a viewer's perspective, neither of the two native English speakers in this study narrated the movie from a viewer's perspective. They mentioned the word "movie" only in the beginning sentences of their responses. They never used words or phrases like *scene*, *viewers*, or *zoom in*, which would indicate that

the subject was speaking from a viewer's perspective.

In Sarah's narration, she balanced her attention between the first part, which consisted of the boy's befriending the balloon on the way to school, and the second part, which consisted of the other boys' grabbing and popping the balloon. As can be seen, the second part deals with conflict, in that the balloon is taken away by the gang of boys, then saved by the boy, and finally popped by the boys. Miyeon and Junyi focused attention on the first part, while Rose focused more on the second part, which, according to her remarks to the researcher, she thought to be the more interesting.

Sarah, Rose, and Yongsik began their narratives with at least one mention of the word "movie" or "balloon" and closed their narratives with "That's the end" or "That's how it ends."

Sarah. *The story of the red balloon...*
Rose. *This is a movie about a little boy and his balloon...*
Yongsik. *The main character in this movie are one boy and the red balloon...*

Sarah. *That's the end.*
Rose. *That's how it ends.*
Yongsik. *That's how it ended.*

These words may be indications of a conventionalized way of narrating the story of a movie in English.

Yongsik said "That's how it ended" both in Korean and in English, while Junyi and Miyeon gave closure to neither their Korean nor English narratives. They gazed at the researcher, who finally had to ask, "Is that the end?"

Responses to Question 2: "What would you tell your friends who have not seen the movie?"

All the subjects except Rose interpreted the question as requiring a brief introduction to their answer and an evaluation. They developed their narratives conversationally and tried to instill in their listener an interest in the movie.

Sarah *I just saw the neatest movie. It was about a little boy who finds this red balloon. But the balloon is like a person. He becomes very good friends with it. They go through all adventures together. It was so funny and cute. But it is sad at the end. I won't tell you what happened, because I want you to see the movie and it is so pretty, the balloon, the colors in the movie. So you need to see when you can.*

Junyi *I saw the movie called* The Red Balloon. *It's about a little boy about the balloon and kept following the boy. I think it has deeper meaning to the movie than what it actually happened but I can't really get the whole point. But at the end, he flied with lots of balloon.*

Yongsik. *I just watched the movie named The Red Balloon. And I heard that the movie was made in France in 1956 and got kind of prize from International Movie Festival. But that movie was really boring. Don't ever watch this movie.*

In contrast, Rose summarized the story in the first three sentences. After that, however, her response was not much different from the one she offered for Question 1, except that she narrated the story in a more lively fashion. Interestingly, she brought up the scene in which the boy happened to see a girl with a blue balloon; she had not mentioned this scene in her response to Question 1. In this response, she seemed to want to add appeal to her narrative by pointing out that the red balloon followed after the blue balloon, just as a boy might follow after a girl.

Rose. *And it will always be his balloon, except that there's another girl who is walking around that had a blue balloon. It seemed to be the same way. They bump each other. Her balloon flies out of her hand and chases back, because it seems that they like each other, like boys and girls.*

Responses to Question 3: The On-Line Task.

All five participants with the exception of Yongsik described only what was going on in the visual images. In Korean, Yongsik took a viewer's perspective and described not only what was going on at a given time but also what would be going on. In English, he just focused on what was going on at a given time.

Yongsik [Korean] *He's climbing up the lamppost. Of course, there will be a big red balloon up in the lamppost.* [The red balloon does not appear in the scene yet.]

Yongsik [English] *The movie just began. The one little boy appears in the screen.*

Rose also took a viewer's perspective in her introductory remarks, saying, "This is the old French film called *The Red Balloon*." However, she never mentioned the word *film* again and just described what was going on.

Strategies of Second Language Learners

Before beginning their narration, Miyeon, Junyi, and Yongsik asked for some time to organize their thoughts, and they spent more time in organizing their thoughts than the native speakers did. They used more filled pauses (the interjection of "um"), hesitations, and drawls, indications that they needed more time to plan their narration and to avoid errors. Miyeon's speaking proficiency was the lowest among the subjects, and she had the highest frequency

of fillers, such as *um* and *no! no!* She especially temporized with *um*'s when she was confronted with challenging verbal tasks.

Miyeon *He could not enter the school and classroom with red balloon. (um) He go home. . . .*

Miyeon had plenty to say, but she realized that her vocabulary was too small for her to express her thoughts. Her use of the filler *um* signals the psychological process of "holding the floor" while she simultaneously plans the continuation of her narrative.

These nonnative speakers did not make any major language errors except those in respect to tense and lexicon. This and their use of filled pauses indicate they were actively engaged in metacognitive processing to plan what they could say with the fewest errors. However, it seems that narration in the L2 strained their abilities enough that errors in tenses persisted.

LIMITATIONS

The researcher asked the subjects to narrate the story as if the addressee had not seen the movie. Nevertheless, the subjects, especially the Korean speakers, presumed that the addressee (the researcher, in this case) already knew the story. Consequently, a limitation of this study is that the data were gathered from conversational settings that are not entirely natural.

In this research, Questions 1, 2, and 3 were carried out in sequence; therefore, the subjects could have anticipated what would be required of them in the in-line task. For example, Yongsik narrated not only what was happening at a given point in the story, but also projected ahead from that point to later consequences or related action in the story. Thus, the order of the tasks could have influenced the results.

DISCUSSION

The study shows that the subjects interpreted and reproduced narratives from different tasks in different ways; within any given task, however, the native and nonnative speakers responded similarly.

The responses of the research subjects to the three questions represented three different tasks. When answering Question 1, "What happened in the movie?" participants tended to interpret the question as a memory task. When answering Question 2, "What could you tell your friends who have not seen the movie?" the respondents tended to interpret the question as requiring a summary and evaluation. They developed their narratives conversationally and tried to instill in the listener an interest in the story. In Question 3, the on-line task, participants narrated the action as it unfolded.

In their responses to all three questions, the native and nonnative speakers showed that they had similar interpretations of the three tasks.

There seemed to be conventionalized ways of opening and closing a narrative, as well as culturally significant lexical items. In Question 1, openings and closings appear to be conventionalized in English. Both Sarah and Rose used an opening and a closing line in their English narratives, while Junyi and Miyeon, speaking in Korean, used neither. While Sarah and Rose personalized the balloon as a friend and a human, Miyeon referred to it as a ghost.

The biggest difference, however, between Korean and English narratives involved the tense and length of narratives. Native English speakers in the U.S. showed a strong preference for narratives in the present tense, while Koreans preferred to use the past tense. Narratives by Koreans were much shorter than American narratives. In addition, some lexical items, such as *ghost*, *dog*, and *mother*, conveyed culture-specific information.

Nonnative speakers spent more time organizing their thoughts and used more pauses, hesitations, fillers, and drawls (lengthening of words) than did nonnative speakers. By resorting to these temporizing devices, the nonnative speakers indicated that they actively used metacognitive processing to plan what they were about to say in an effort to minimize errors.

Exposure to speakers of the target language enables L2 speakers to acquire the target language narrative conventions. Yongsik came to the U.S. 8 years ago and worked for a company for a few years. He has remained in the U.S. longer than the other nonnative speakers, and he has had the most interaction with native English speakers. Even though he made many errors in his narration, he seemed to be comfortable while narrating in English. He used a conventional opening and closing in Question 1 and relied on the present tense in the on-line task, just as native speakers generally do in their narration.

This pilot study shows that Korean and U.S. speakers may have different conventionalized ways of narrating a story line or sequence of related events. Awareness of this difference should help Korean and native English speakers appreciate the patterns of narratives in each other's cultures and should help Korean students learning English narrative style. Moreover, not only does culture influence L1 narrative (Tannen, 1980), but also L2 narrative as seen in the case of Yongsik, who, by living in the U.S., acquired American narrative conventions.

Future research, naturally, is needed to determine how idiosyncratic the findings of this pilot

study were. As noted above, the English speakers in this study, unlike those in Tannen's, did not narrate the movie from a viewer's perspective. Besides simply increasing the sample size, though, efforts should be made to establish in what ways nonnative speakers acquire L2 narrative conventions and how long their acquisition takes. Moreover, research should examine how and if the L2 culture influences L1 narratives.

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Rethinking the Red Ink: Audio-Feedback in the ESL Writing Classroom

ROBERT JOHANSON

If there were a Holy Grail in the teaching of ESL/EFL composition, it would probably contain the secrets of how to most effectively respond to our students' writing. In this article, I wish to offer a solution to this quest by describing audio-feedback, a practice that has proven to be a valued addition to my teaching of academic writing. I will begin by briefly defining audio-feedback and show why I have found it to be an effective alternative to traditional written comments. Then I shall offer some caveats for those who might wish to incorporate audio-feedback into their teaching methods.

INTRODUCTION

Audio-feedback is a teaching method in which the writing instructor responds to students' compositions by recording his or her comments onto an audiocassette tape. Following the recording session, which typically lasts from 5 to 20 minutes for each paper, the instructor returns the paper and the cassette tape to the student. The student then revises the paper while listening to the teacher's recorded comments.

Let me emphasize that I am hardly the first to employ audio-feedback in the teaching of ESL/EFL writing. Unfortunately, a lamentable dearth of research exists in the second language writing research literature on this potentially useful pedagogical tool. My hope is that the technique discussed here will both encourage writing instructors to experiment with this nontraditional means of providing feedback to students and motivate researchers to produce both qualitative and quantitative research on its efficacy in the writing classroom. Furthermore, I want to emphasize that I do not advocate audio-feedback as the *only* method teachers use to respond to their students' writing. Rather, I suggest that audio-feedback be employed in tandem with other time-proven response methods such as peer editing and teacher-student conferences.

DESCRIPTION OF AUDIO-FEEDBACK

While audio-feedback could be applied at all levels of ESL/EFL composition, the approach I describe in this paper has been tailored to fit the academic writing classes I teach to international graduate students at the University of Texas at Austin. Representing a broad range of disci-

plines in both the natural and social sciences, a majority of my students have been required by their advisors to take my course. Hence, my aim is to provide them with a solid foundation of general academic writing skills as rapidly as possible. To do this, I rely heavily on both the social constructionist philosophy (which maintains that the principal challenge facing newcomers to the discourse community of their field is to become familiar with and to utilize its rhetorical conventions) and the process approach (in which composing is broken down into the following stages—brainstorming, clustering, outlining, drafting, and revision). I have found that audio-feedback complements these two methods because by *recording* my impressions, I can offer students more holistic comments about their writing, impart to them my own "hierarchy of corrections," and inform them of the recursive process I go through as I attempt to negotiate the meaning of their written texts.

When I first learned of audio-feedback, I was, at best, skeptical. Although the idea of "talking out" my comments sounded interesting, I doubted that it would be worth the time and energy. Once I began experimenting with this method, however, I learned that it actually saves me *and* my students a lot of time in the long run. More importantly, it enhances the quality of the feedback and students' responses to it. Because I am able to make more comprehensive comments, I do not have to explain and re-explain my ideas to each student after class and in office hours. At the same time, my students report that audio-feedback affords them the opportunity to listen to my comments as often as they wish, whenever and wherever they wish.

Another motivation for trying audio-feedback came when I began to realize that the comments and corrections I had so painstakingly scribbled in the margins were going largely unheeded. It seemed that no matter how carefully I had constructed my feedback, subsequent teacher-student conferences would reveal a major gap of understanding between what I thought I was saying in my comments and how they were perceived by my students.

One of the most beneficial consequences of this approach is that I am able to convey to my students my own "hierarchy of errors." When students read written comments on a corrected text, they have no way of knowing the order in which the comments were made and which ones the teacher considers particularly important. Most of my students, originally taught English according to the Grammar Translation Method in their home countries, tend to view writing as a grammatical exercise rather than as a process of constructing meaning. Because they

believe that the content and organization of their essays are subordinate to sentence-level grammatical accuracy, they tend to downplay comments on how to develop their ideas at the expense of grammatical issues such as proper subject-verb agreement.

To counter this undue emphasis on grammar, I typically employ audio-feedback in two stages for each draft of a student's paper. For the first draft, I comment only on content and organizational issues in the text. Only after students have digested my initial comments on how they organized their ideas do I comment on sentence-level linguistic mistakes such as punctuation and run-on sentences. I have found that, by taking this approach, audio-feedback allows me to emphasize content over discrete-point grammar mistakes. Students have reported that this helps them combat the urge to over-monitor their composing in earlier drafts and focus more on organization than grammar.

Audio-feedback also complements the process approach to teaching composition, as it allows the instructor to provide students with a holistic impression of their writing. Before using audio-feedback, I found it both time-consuming and frustrating to craft comments that were detailed enough to be understood and yet succinct enough to fit in the margins. Given that most of my comments are in the form of questions, I have found that with audio-feedback I can offer richer feedback and different versions of the same comment from different angles to maximize student comprehension. Instead of being forced to condense my comments in one digestible sentence in the margin, I could "speak" to each student as though he or she were in a face-to-face conference.

Another advantage of audio-feedback is that by *talking* out my comments, my participation in the writing process shifts from being an impersonal grader to a writing *coach*. Many of my students have reported that, among the five skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking, and culture), writing provokes the most anxiety for them. The reasons they often cite are that they lack experience writing in English and that the mistakes one makes are on permanent display for whomever might stumble across their text. To assuage my students' fear of writing in English, I strive to offer positive feedback that capitalizes on their strengths rather than their weaknesses. I do this by asking questions as opposed to making emphatic statements. For example, I may make such comments as "I like this sentence, but are you sure that it belongs in this paragraph?" or "You have constructed a strong argument here. Have you considered rearranging your points so that you can conclude with the strongest ones?" As I ask these

questions, I try to maintain a positive and encouraging tone of voice that shows that I care about my students and their writing.

Audio-feedback also offers the writing instructor the opportunity to demonstrate the processes employed in negotiating the meaning of students' texts. As with many writing teachers, I do not simply dive into the student's text and read it from introduction to conclusion. Instead, I spend a couple of minutes reviewing the format of the draft by checking whether there are page numbers, whether the margins and font are set appropriately, and whether the references conform to APA standards. After covering these points, I quickly skim the body paragraphs to determine whether the student has employed the necessary cohesive devices (transitions) for presenting arguments. Many international students lack experience writing the deductive, writer-responsible prose expected of them in U.S. academia. As a result, they are often surprised—sometimes even offended—when the reader informs them that it was difficult to follow their arguments. Through audio-feedback, students can "hear" my difficulty understanding their moves in "real time." This approach has saved me countless hours in teacher-student conferences because I am not required to re-explain what it was that confused me in reading a student's text.

Yet another advantage of audio-feedback is that it allows me to show my students that, contrary to what they sometimes think, native speakers—even teachers—are not omniscient beings who always have the perfect word or expression on the tip of their tongues. Often overwhelmed by the prodigious linguistic and psychological difficulties they face as "outsiders" in U.S. universities, many international students tend to be depressed about the quality of their English writing. There are a number of reasons for this:

- International students often have extremely high expectations of themselves (as most were at the top of the class in their home universities).
- Many professors in U.S. academia tend to view their writing from a deficiency standpoint.
- Although international students rarely have the chance to view their native-speaking colleagues' writing, they often assume that their own is sub-par in comparison.

To counter these concerns, I concentrate on building a sense of solidarity with my students as "mutual sufferers" of the difficulties of writing. When suggesting another way to rephrase a sentence, for example, I sometimes take several minutes to "talk aloud" as I continue to formulate and reformulate my suggestions. Hearing that "even a teacher"

might have difficulty finding the perfect term seems to be a great relief to the students. This, coupled with the enthusiastic intonation in which I express my comments, tends to be an emotional boost for them in that they realize they are not alone in their "struggle" with the writing process.

A Typical Audio-Feedback Session

As mentioned above, I typically employ the process approach (brainstorming, clustering, outlining, drafting, and revising) and social interactive activities (peer editing and teacher-student conferences) in my writing classes. After students have discussed their topic and justified their outline with their peer writing partner(s), I ask them to write the first draft and, with it, submit a blank 60- or 90-minute cassette tape.

With the student's first draft in front of me and pencil in hand, I turn on the tape recorder and speak into the microphone as if "we" were in a conference. I invariably begin with a short greeting such as, "You're doing a great job in the class so far. . . ." Then I comment on my general impressions of the format along the lines of "Do all of your citations conform to the APA guidelines? Are you sure that you need to capitalize the titles of a journal article . . .?" Finally I offer some questions regarding the student's moves and how they organized their argument, such as, "In all of the body paragraphs you do a good job of offering transitions except the last paragraph. What transitions might be better suited for the last paragraph?" As I speak, I mark the paper, often with a question mark and a short phrase. I am also careful to repeat with some frequency which section I am examining. In this way, the students will have little trouble following my corrections as they listen to the tape with the paper before them.

As noted above, it is not until the second or subsequent draft that I comment on grammatical errors. As I "talk out" my comments, I mark the errors using standard correction symbols such as those located in the *Bedford Handbook for Writers*. By using these symbols, I can offer my students the opportunity to identify their topical errors *before* they listen to the cassette or when they do not have a tape player at hand. Many students have reported that they first read the correction symbols, try to identify the appropriate "answer," and then listen to the tape to confirm their understanding.

After I have finished making my comments, which can vary from between 5 and 30 minutes, depending on which draft is being read, I then return the tape and paper to the student and set a due date for the next draft.

I often suggest that the student listen to the tape at least twice to make sure that he or she has understood my comments. Some students report that they find it easier first to listen to the tape alone and then with their paper in front of them. I also require that students submit the previous draft(s) with the draft they are submitting. By looking at the previous draft(s), I can review my original comments and questions to determine whether the student took them into consideration in rewriting the paper.

When to use Audio-Feedback

I have found that the use of audio-feedback is particularly effective at the beginning of the semester. This early introduction to the learning method enables the students to become accustomed to my idiosyncratic manner of speaking (pronunciation, word choice, intonation, etc.) and helps to dispel the notion that I am an autocratic teacher out to "grade" them (Hafez, 1999). It is well-known in our field that the concept of "teacher" is a culturally-laden term. In some Asian cultures, for example, university instructors tend to be authority figures who demand deference from students, whereas in the United States the teacher-student relationship is often less hierarchical. I have found that employing audio-feedback early in the semester helps students make the necessary cultural adjustments to understand the "open" relationship that I prefer.

Another advantage to using audio-feedback early in the semester is that it prepares students psychologically and linguistically for the conferences I will hold with them later in the semester. As noted above, many of my students come from education systems in which the purpose of English instruction is to help students pass entrance examinations rather than increase their communicative competence. Since these entrance examinations often contain only a single "one-shot" English writing component, most students arrive in the United States unfamiliar with the process approach to first and second language composition. By hearing on tape how I approach the reading of their essays, they become familiar with my own manner of assessing their essay. In large part, this effort involves learning the writing-teacher-jargon that I use when I discuss their writing, including such terms as cohesive device (transition), moves, outline, brainstorming, topic sentence, main idea, and thesis statement. As a result, the students are better prepared for teacher-student conferences and adapt more easily to my philosophy towards teaching and the writing process in general.

Caveats

As mentioned above, responding to students' essays with

audio-feedback allows the instructor to give more feedback than traditional methods. However, through firsthand experience and conversations with my colleagues, I have learned that it is easy to overload students with too much information during the first audio-feedback session. Also, students who have never encountered audio-feedback also need some time to become accustomed to it. Since most students have no prior experience listening to an instructor analyze their writing on tape, their ability to absorb the teacher's comments is likely to be limited.

Teachers using audio-feedback for the first time should not wait until the last moment and try to evaluate the entire class in one sitting. Although audio-feedback saves the instructor much time in the long run because he or she does not have to "rehash" statements for each student (who might, for example, not understand the teacher's handwriting on a particular comment), it takes some time to become comfortable with the process. If teachers rush through their audio-feedback sessions, they might speak too quickly for their students to grasp what they are trying to tell them.

Another problem I have run into in the past involves the availability of cassette players for students. With the advent of CDs, I have found that some students do not have access to cassette players. Before implementing audio-feedback, the instructor should make sure that students can either borrow a cassette player from the school or from a classmate. Also, even when students do have cassette players, more than a few students simply forget to bring the blank cassettes on the day they are instructed to do so. Hence, I suggest that instructors begin asking for students' cassettes at least two class sessions prior to the audio-feedback session.

A final caveat: Do not succumb to the temptation of substituting audio-feedback for teacher-student conferences. It must be recognized that audio-feedback does not offer the all-important one-on-one interchange between student and teacher that allows the teacher to strengthen effectively the student's learning. Although the teacher might feel that his or her comments are clear and concise, some students have more difficulty understanding than others. Furthermore, students may be embarrassed to admit that they did not understand the teachers' comments due to low listening comprehension skills. For this reason, teachers should allow ample class time for students to ask any questions they might have regarding their audio-feedback, especially following the first session. In addition, instructors must make certain that audio-feedback does not curtail teacher-student conferences.

CONCLUSION

In my teaching of ESL/EFL composition to international students, I have found audio-feedback to be an indispensable addition to my teaching methodologies for student writing. It enables the instructor to "talk out" comments instead of scribbling remarks in the margins. It also allows the instructor the opportunity to impart more meaningful feedback to the student, reveals his or her "hierarchy of errors," and offers the student the opportunity to experience the process that the instructor goes through in reading a paper. With all of these advantages, however, instructors who use this method should keep in mind that it may take some time for them and their students to become accustomed to spoken rather than written comments. They must also remember that audio-feedback should be seen as an addition to—and not a substitute for—other means of enhancing the development of writing skills.

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Liar or Truth-Teller? Logic Puzzles in the Foreign-Language Classroom

ESTHER RAIZEN

This paper discusses logic puzzles, often used with students in the mathematics classroom, in the context of foreign-language education and highlights them as tools for individual or class practice in a problem-based learning environment that combines challenge and entertainment. The author introduces sample puzzles accompanied by the basic principles of authoring and solving them, and makes references to the possible role of puzzles in vocabulary acquisition and reinforcement of language structures.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is based on the author's experience in teaching Hebrew as a foreign language. It is written, however, in general terms, as the author believes that the outlined principles apply to foreign language education in general and are pertinent to the ESL classroom as well.

Logic puzzles are often used in enrichment activities designed for middle and high school mathematics students. Teachers of mathematics are faced with the daily challenge of guiding their students toward systematic thinking and basic understanding of rules and patterns that need to be applied in certain situations and/or a specific order. Cautious reading and a methodical approach to data are essential to problem-solving and situations in which a student is asked to perform a task with the aim of producing results that are valid, reproducible, objective, and completely detached from the circumstances surrounding the specific person who is assigned the task.

A simple example that illustrates the challenge inherent in the need for cautious reading is the treatment of one-way versus two-way implication rules (also referred to as conditionals vs. biconditionals). In both types of rules an "if /x/, then /y/" condition is stated. In a one-way implication rule the protasis ("if" part) necessitates the apodosis ("then" part), but not vice versa. In a two-way implication rule the protasis necessitates the apodosis and the apodosis necessitates the protasis—neither can exist without the other. If either exists without the other, one may say that the rule has been disobeyed.

One-Way Implications

A one-way implication rule may be stated as follows: "When Dr. Turner comes to David's house, David hides under the table." The reader may be asked the following questions about this statement:

1. If the rule is obeyed, what happens without fail when Dr. Turner comes to David's house?
2. If the rule is not disobeyed, what can you say with certainty about Dr. Turner when you know that David is hiding under the table?
3. If the rule is not disobeyed, what can you say with certainty about David if you know that Dr. Turner is not visiting his house?
4. What must happen for you to say that the rule has been disobeyed?

Correct answers depend on whether or not one reads the statement and questions very carefully:

1. David is hiding under the table.
2. Nothing can be said with certainty about Dr. Turner, as David can hide under the table for many reasons other than Dr. Turner's visit.
3. Nothing can be said with certainty about David, for all you know about him is what he does when Dr. Turner comes to his house. You have not been given information that would allow you to predict his actions in any other circumstances.
4. If Dr. Turner comes to David's house and David does not hide under the table, you can say that the rule has been disobeyed.

Some readers are likely to answer Questions 2 and 3 based on the false assumption that a visit by Dr. Turner and David's hiding under the table are necessarily related. This may be likened to the false assumption ostensibly suggested by the context, according to which Dr. Turner is a physician and David is a scared child. For all we know, Dr. Turner may be a Doctor of Philosophy who likes to play hide-and-go-seek with David when he comes to David's house.

Two-Way Implications

A two-way implication rule must change the readers' way of looking at the same questions. If the original statement is worded as "David hides under the table when, and only when, Dr. Turner comes to his house," the answers to three out of the four questions will change:

1. David is hiding under the table.
2. One can say with certainty that Dr. Turner is at David's house.
3. One can say with certainty that David is not hiding under the table.

4. If Dr. Turner comes to visit and David does not hide under the table, or if David hides under the table when Dr. Turner is not visiting his house, one can say that the rule has been disobeyed.

BENEFITS IN THE FLE CLASSROOM

Exposure to exercises that contain no numerical expressions yet require logical inferences allows students of mathematics to develop systematic thinking strategies, a tendency to look for patterns and apply them, and, most importantly, awareness of the need to examine data carefully. These are of great importance to all disciplines and areas of study, including foreign language acquisition. The use of logic inference exercises is by no means presented in this paper as a methodological breakthrough in foreign-language education. Much like their role in the mathematics classroom, logic puzzles are recommended here for enrichment activities or warm-ups and wrap-ups, and discussed in the context of tools that are available to foreign-language teachers. By focusing on the thought process involved in solving logic puzzles, however, the author would like to suggest that the challenge they present merits serious consideration well beyond the common perception of puzzles as games designed for entertainment only. They are well suited for contributing to a problem-based environment that is conducive to learning in the ESL classroom and may play an important role in the development of critical and higher-order thinking skills (Allen, 1998).

In the preface to his book *The Lady or the Tiger and Other Logic Puzzles*, Smullyan (1982) points to the following phenomenon:

> So many people I have met claim to hate math, and yet are enormously intrigued by any logic or math problem I give them, provided I present it in the form of a puzzle. I would not be at all surprised if good puzzle books prove to be one of the best cures for the so-called 'math anxiety.' (p. vii)

Similar comments can be found in other works that address the topic of developing analytical skills by using riddles and puzzles in the classroom and outside of it. The element of competition, which is inherent in puzzles, adds to the excitement they generate and serves as a catalyst for learning, especially when teacher-student relations maintain the balance that is illustrated by Robert Allen (1995):

> A curious relationship exists between a puzzle setter and the reader. Each tries to read the other's mind, to anticipate the mental processes that go into the construction of a puzzle. It becomes a battle of

> wits in which either side strives for supremacy. (p. 6)

Competition in this context is often unique in nature: The reader derives satisfaction from solving a puzzle whether or not others know about it and irrespective of whether a prize is offered as a reward or recognition is gained. Even awareness of the trivial importance of the simplest puzzles (e.g., jigsaw puzzles designed for young children) does not diminish the fascination people have with them. The "solitaire" effect may be of special importance to foreign-language learners who are intimidated by group settings and prefer to seek the privacy of a self-paced exercise that is both challenging and rewarding.

From the standpoint of a foreign-language teacher, logic puzzles offer an additional benefit: They require repetition of words and sentence segments in a limited, well-defined context and at a frequency that in all other circumstances may be perceived as unreasonable and may generate boredom. The importance of repeated exposure to vocabulary and elements of sentence structure has long been recognized as a basic pedagogical principle in the area of language acquisition. Lewis (1993) outlined the advantages of concentrating on fixed and semi-fixed expressions in language teaching, basing his analysis on Krashen's Input Hypothesis, according to which exposing learners to the right amount of input is bound to lead to acquisition (see Krashen, 1985, 1990, and 1993, and a summary of derivative arguments in Ellis, 1994). Likewise, Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) argued in favor of repeating lexical phrases in context as a means of enhancing vocabulary acquisition. According to Ellis, word recognition and naming are faster if you have recognized or named that word within the last day; tuning of the lexicon by experience (implicit memory) has been demonstrated in classroom studies; and "it is practice that makes perfect in the input and output modules" (Ellis, 1995, p. 15). For an illustration of repetition in context, the reader may note that different variants of the phrase "hide under" occur in the above discussion of conditionals vs. biconditionals twelve times and the expression "say with certainty" is repeated six times—a high frequency relative to the length of the passage. Thus, beyond their general benefits and the gratification that comes with solving them, logic puzzles provide foreign-language teachers with an opportunity to offer their students a custom-designed context for practicing vocabulary and various sentence structures in the target language in an atmosphere of fun, while using an original tool that enriches the classroom routine.

In the course of 1998-1999, the author collected data on students' readiness to tackle logic puzzles and other word puzzles. Students in first- and second-semester Hebrew classes were offered six puzzles every semester as "extra-credit" assignments: two logic puzzles, two word searches, and two crossword puzzles. Full credit was given for a successful solution, and partial credit for an attempt. Fifty-three percent of the students (51/96) attempted to untangle logic puzzles, and only 27% of those (13/51) succeeded in solving the puzzles. In comparison, 96% of the students (92/96) attempted to solve crossword puzzles that were offered to them, and 89% of those (82/92) succeeded. All 96 students attempted to solve word searches, and 94% of them (90/96) succeeded. Of the 51 students who attempted to solve logic puzzles, 38 (75%) were second-semester students. This seems to suggest that the readiness to tackle logic puzzles may increase with students' growing ability to apply the target language in discourse and the development of higher confidence in general target-language use, and that simple word puzzles are more suitable for beginners. Logic puzzles are indeed much more difficult than other puzzles, yet their many benefits outweigh the difficulties that they may present to both the teacher who creates them and the students who attempt to solve them.

DESCRIPTION OF LOGIC PUZZLES

In logic puzzles the readers are usually asked to match up sets of things. Similar in structure to the statement and following questions at the beginning of this paper, the puzzles open with a narrative that introduces the basic sets and statements of clarification which illustrate the relations between various elements of the sets and other elements within the set or outside of it. The reader is asked to draw conclusions based on careful consideration of all given clues and elimination of variables. Often a crosshatch grid is used to record data. A correct combination is marked by an "o," and an impossible combination is marked by an "x." These symbols are placed in the square at the intersection of two elements from different sets—an "o" means that these two elements match, and an "x" means that they do not. A correct combination marked by an "o" allows the reader to mark all other squares in the same row and column as "x," and, similarly, three "x" marks in a four-square row or column require that the fourth square be marked as "o" and thus represents the correct answer. A sequence of deductions based on the given clues and careful plotting of all pieces of information

bring the reader to a final solution of the puzzle.

For example, in a riddle like "Dogs and their Owners" below, if the puzzle setter states that Max belongs to David, the reader can deduce two things:

1. Max does not belong to Rachel, Miriam or Ethan.
2. Barkley, Archie and Garfield do not belong to David.

The crosshatch grid representing this information appears in Figure 1.

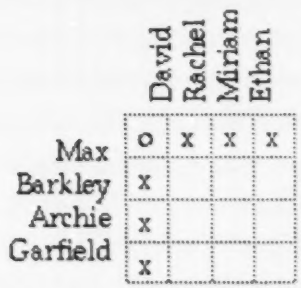

Figure 1: Dogs and Owners Puzzle Grid

The neat visual organization of the information is again a great asset for the language teacher—any attempt to provide the same amount of information by using another visual tool, such as a picture, would prove to be difficult, if not impossible.

Two logic puzzles are provided here (see appendix) for the sake of demonstration and practice. The first, which is simpler, matches three sets—dogs, dog colors, and dog owners. The other identifies bakers by their first name, last name, the items they bake, and the special ingredients that they use. Puzzles of the first type can be used to introduce students to logic puzzles and to reinforce structures such as "belong to" or "neither/nor." Puzzles like "Bakers," which matches four sets, are best for reinforcing vocabulary in context. Our sample puzzles open with a narrative, which is followed by numbered clues, by the deductions based on these clues, and finally by an answer stated as a narrative. In both types, the puzzle setter may give away one or more of the correct matches to assist readers in arranging the clues and solving the puzzle (e.g., "Max is brown"). Although one should expect variations in the organizational processes used by different readers, basic reading/solving strategies will be similar and will unquestionably involve frequent repetition of words and phrases. The target vocabulary component can be limited to one or more of the sets, according to the purpose of the exercise and its degree of difficulty.

DESIGN AND DIFFICULTY OF LOGIC PUZZLES

Puzzles like the ones provided here are considered elementary in their degree of difficulty.[1] Even such puzzles are not easy to solve at first, but they become easier with experience and the development of basic plotting and

solving strategies. More advanced logic puzzles may require that the reader make a set of assumptions that are not based on any of the clues and eliminate the incorrect ones after having checked them against the provided clues. The puzzle setter should make sure to present the information in a clear, concise manner, especially in simple puzzles. Some degree of "ornamentation" may be in the interest of the narrative flow (e.g., "the children like Jack's cookies," instead of the plain statement "Jack bakes cookies"), but it should be kept at a minimum. Even if the puzzle setter does not include irrelevant, distracting, or deliberately misleading information in the narrative or the clues, and even when the clues are very clearly and simply organized, many students may find the puzzles too hard to handle and, consequently, experience frustration. The author recommends, therefore, that language teachers use logic puzzles sparsely and carefully, always in circumstances that emphasize the appreciation of their inherent difficulty. Such circumstances may be "extra-credit" assignments for students wishing to improve their grades or advance faster than their peers, a group activity in the target language in or outside of the classroom, or a lecture by students who might demonstrate their arguments while using an overhead projector and presenting questions.

Advanced students who are asked to attempt authoring logic puzzles find it to be a great compliment and a welcome challenge. This exercise may also provide a good context for a "one-on-one" student-teacher activity. It is by no means a simple task, but it becomes easier once the basic principles of how one matches sets become clear. The simplest authoring strategy is substitution, that is, using the same basic narrative and arguments and modifying them according to the context desired by the language teacher (e.g., substitute favorite painters and their masterpieces for dogs and their names). Should substitution be used, careful rearrangement of the clues' order and variation in their wording are demanded so as to prevent mechanical solutions based on plotting techniques only.

CONCLUSION

Logic puzzles should be explored and utilized as a valuable enrichment tool that allows language teachers to add color to their class activities and create mental exercises, thus providing challenge and entertainment at the same time—"edutainment" at its best.

NOTES

1. Based on the ratings used in the monthly magazine "Dell Logic Puzzles."

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Appendix: Sample Logic Puzzles

PUZZLE 1: Dogs and their Owners

Four neighbors, two boys, David and Ethan, and two girls, Rachel and Miriam, own four dogs, Max, Barkley, Archie and Garfield, whom they like very much. The dogs are in four different colors: white, brown, black, and silver.

1. Max is brown.
2. Ethan's mother gave him Barkley for his fifth birthday.
3. Rachel does not like Garfield, because he barks too much.
4. Garfield is not silver.
5. The girls like neither the white dog nor Max.

Solution:

The following conclusions can be drawn based on the given facts and using the chart in Figure 2 as an aid:

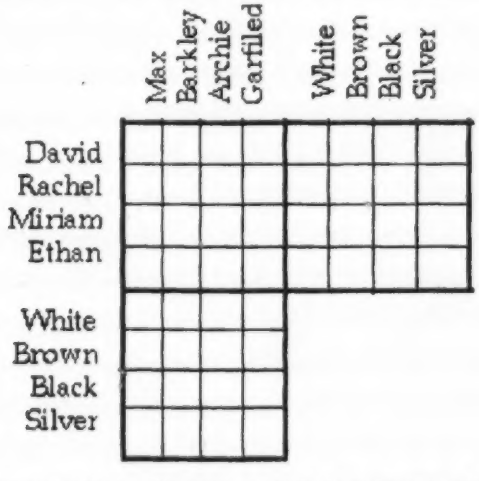

Figure 2: Dogs, Owners, and Colors Puzzle Grid

You know that Max is brown (Clue 1). In Figure 2, mark the square "Max-brown" with an "o," and the rest of the squares in that column with "x," as Max cannot be in any other color. At the same time, only Max can be brown, therefore mark "Barkley-brown," "Archie-brown," and "Garfield-brown" with an "x."

Ethan's dog is Barkley (Clue 2). Mark the square "Ethan-Barkley" with an "o," and assign an "x" to "Barkley-David," "Barkley-Rachel," and "Barkley-

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Miriam." You know now that Ethan's dog, Barkley, is not brown, since Max is brown (Clue 1). Mark then the square "Ethan-brown" as "x."

Garfield belongs neither to Rachel nor to Ethan (Clues 2, 3). Garfield is not silver (Clue 4).

The white dog belongs neither to Rachel nor to Miriam (Clue 5). Therefore, Max has to belong to David, Garfield belongs to Miriam, and Archie belongs to Rachel.

Rachel and Ethan like neither a silver dog nor a brown one.

David's dog, Max, is brown (Clue 1).

Ethan must have a white dog, which means that Barkley is white (Clue 2).

Garfield is black, and Archie is silver.

Answer:

Max is a brown dog that belongs to David; Barkley is a white dog that belongs to Ethan; Archie is a silver dog that belongs to Rachel; Garfield is a black dog that belongs to Miriam.

PUZZLE 2: Bakers.

Abel, Igor, Joel, and Jack like to bake. Each of them specializes in a different kind of pastry: cakes, biscuits, cookies, and pies. In a recent baking contest, each of them used a special ingredient: Brown sugar, raisins, coconut, and chocolate. The last names of the four bakers are Shore, Levy, Kerman, and Monti. Who baked what, and what ingredients did he use?

1. Joel Monti does not like raisins and does not know how to bake pies.
2. Jack's last name has five letters. His children like his cookies very much.
3. Mr. Kerman, who is not Igor, used brown sugar.
4. Mr. Shore did not use chocolate.
5. The biscuits contained many raisins.

Solution:

Based on the given facts and using the chart in Figure 3, we reach the following conclusions:

Joel's last name is Monti. Joel Monti did not bake a pie, and did not use raisins. Jack's last name must be Shore, because it has five letters and cannot be Monti.

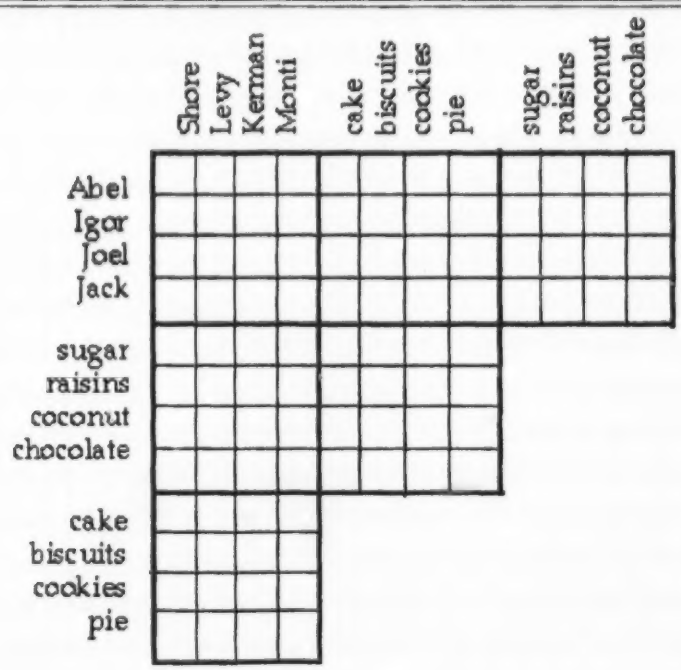

Figure 3: Bakers Puzzle Grid

Jack Shore baked cookies.
Igor's last name cannot be Shore, Monti or Kerman. It must be Levy. Igor Levy did not use brown sugar.
Abel's last name must be Kerman, and he used brown sugar.
Jack Shore did not use chocolate, which means that the cookies did not have chocolate.
The biscuits had raisins, which means that Joel Monti did not bake biscuits. Neither did he bake a pie or cookies (Jack baked cookies). He must have baked a cake.
The cake had neither raisins nor brown sugar.
Jack Shore did not use raisins, chocolate or brown sugar. He must have used coconut for his cookies.
Igor Levy used raisins, and baked biscuits.
Joel Monti baked a cake, and Abel Kerman baked a pie.

Answer:

Abel Kerman baked a pie and used brown sugar. Igor Levy baked biscuits and used raisins. Joel Monti baked a cake and used chocolate. Jack Shore baked cookies and used coconut.

Book Review

Untangling the web: St. Martin's guide to language and culture on the internet. Carl Blyth. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1998. Pp. 119.

SUSAN M. VALENTINE

In the past, language teachers and students alike faced a constant struggle in obtaining high-quality authentic materials with which to enhance foreign language learning. However, with the emergence of the Internet, authentic materials are now widely available. Indeed, the whole world is now, literally, at our fingertips, and along with it, a new problem: how to access it! Blyth's *Untangling the Web* goes a long way toward solving this problem.

Originally created to help introduce students at the University of Texas at Austin to the wealth of language resources available on the Internet, the book consists of a preface and five chapters in which the author holds the reader's hand through the seemingly complicated process of deciphering the World Wide Web. In Chapter 1 (pp. 1-11), the author spends the minimum time necessary to clarify the basics of getting on-line. Then, in Chapter 2 (pp. 12-42), using hands-on experience at the computer, the book guides the reader step-by-step through browser functions, including visits to several interesting foreign language Web sites.

Although the book is skewed toward Spanish, German, and French, the author includes examples from several languages in order to inform a broad audience. One potential roadblock is that, although Blyth provides a glossary of Web-related terms in French, Spanish, and German, the book does not directly address how to set up a computer with foreign language fonts and keyboard layouts. The annotated bibliography lists a number of Web sites for Russian, Japanese, Arabic, and Chinese through which the savvy surfer may eventually find the necessary software downloads. However, those with an interest in other languages will have to rely on the hands-on tutorial in Chapter 2 to teach them how to search out the desired fonts and keyboard layouts.

Another obvious disadvantage is that, for brevity's sake, the book demonstrates only one browser, "Netscape Navigator, version 3.0," using a Macintosh computer. Nevertheless, the book is so well illustrated that if readers are somewhat familiar with their own computer systems, every command can be readily adapted.

An additional difficulty with any book on this topic is the explosive growth and fluidity of

the Internet. Web sites frequently move or disappear completely. The author combats this problem by carefully illustrating his points using only sites that have demonstrated stability and dependability. When this review was written, a few of the recommended sites were already defunct; however, due to comprehensive explanations of how to find alternate sites, these losses were not problematic.

Although the book is clearly designed with the university-level novice computer user in mind, it is written in a conversational style that should appeal to foreign language students and teachers across a broad range of learning levels. Additionally, moderately experienced "Web surfers" will find useful tips, such as how to download and print images or view videos, throughout the book.

Chapter 3 (pp. 43-67) should prove particularly interesting to those previously overwhelmed by the immense amount of information available on the Internet. Here, the most popular and useful search engines are discussed in detail, with the advantages and disadvantages of each clearly delineated in tables and graphics. Search strategies and techniques are also plainly and concisely demonstrated. Chapter 4 (pp. 68-98) discusses the basics of communicating on-line, including sections on email, pen pal Web sites, mailing lists, newsgroups, and chat rooms. Finally, Chapter 5 (pp. 99-119) provides a well-illustrated sampling of the types of language resources available via the Internet. Using this chapter as a guide, the reader may visit a virtual French city, read the news in German, learn to prepare paella from a Spanish language cookbook, or visit a language school for on-line dictionaries and grammar help. Clearly, Chapters 4 and 5 will be helpful to the foreign language teachers or learners who want to incorporate real-world experiences into their language curriculum.

On the whole, minor compromises for brevity's sake do not detract, but rather contribute to the book's usefulness by offering the reader a fast but thorough tutorial. The hands-on approach and conversational writing style greatly assist in the daunting task of whittling down the massive and potentially overwhelming Internet into usable, accessible, understandable chunks. After completing these entertaining exercises, even the computer-phobic will sift through the wealth of available resources with confidence. Blyth's book is a tremendous tool for those who need help getting started using the Internet for foreign language teaching or learning, or who simply want to learn more effective Internet usage strategies.

Book Review

Comparative Semitic linguistics: A manual. Patrick R. Bennett. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1998. Pp. 269.

MORRIS A. KARAM

Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual, by Patrick R. Bennett provides students of linguistics, especially students of comparative linguistics, a workbook for broadening their knowledge of the relationships between Semitic languages, those which originated in the Middle East and South Eastern Africa. As there are numerous drills that demand students to apply the knowledge within the text, students take an active role in their learning.

Bennett's aim in *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual*, is threefold: first, to give a basic introduction to the study of linguistics; second, to offer an overview on many points of comparison between Semitic languages, ranging from orthography to phonology; and third, to discuss their historical developments.

Bennett concentrates on this linguistic introduction in the first twenty pages of the work. Although he defines the terminology surrounding linguistic studies, the number of terms Bennett throws at readers is bound to overwhelm them. For readers not familiar with linguistics, this working knowledge of terms will be essential for reading the rest of the book.

The number of pages in *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual* belies its actual length. What follows the conclusion (p. 67) is some 200 pages that are divided as such: three paradigms (phonology, morphology of nouns, and morphology of verbs) comparing words of many Semitic languages, an extensive bibliography, six comparative wordlists, and finally, a short orthographic history of these languages.

In addition to this basic introduction to linguistics, the remainder of the book (the book being the first 67 pages) discusses what constitutes a Semitic language. Bennett notes that Semitic languages cannot be defined by grammatical or lexical features, but rather are recognizable by a "gestalt compounded of phonological, morphological, and lexical elements" (pp. 19-20). That is, Semitic languages do not derive from a "Proto-Semitic," nor do their commonalties constitute them as Semitic. In showing readers what makes a language Semitic, Bennett cannot give the reader a hard and fast definition. The best he can do is show readers examples within Semitic languages that suggest why they are classified as Semitic languages. He tries to do this through a comparative analysis of certain words from

Semitic languages phonologically or morphologically similar.

Despite Bennett's apparent efforts at keeping his discussion of the linguistic features of Semitic languages at a broad, basic level, he often slips into subject matter almost requiring an introductory course in linguistics and two years of study in a Semitic language (preferably Arabic or Hebrew). This constitutes the biggest drawback of *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual*.

The most beneficial part of this book may be Chapter 3, entitled "An Outline of Comparative Linguistics." Through a discussion of his protocol for comparing Semitic languages, Bennett gives readers guidelines on how they may conduct a comparative analysis on any groups of cognate languages. Hence, this chapter may prove an asset to students of all languages.

The value of *Comparative Linguistics: A Manual* lies in its use as a reference source. As stated above, the bulk of the text is not contained within the book proper, but consists of lists and paradigms that show points of comparison between words with similar meanings in different Semitic languages. Moreover, there are maps that show which cognates were particular to certain areas of the Middle East and Africa over time, as well as a brief discussion on the many Semitic scripts. For students of Semitic languages, these lists and paradigms are a valuable supplement, for they provide comprehensive information on the history of these languages. Furthermore, the bibliography of *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual* provides a solid basis for those not familiar with Semitic languages from which to begin the study of this language family.

The unfortunate coincidence found in *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual* is that many of the languages Bennett deals with are obsolete. They are either ancient (such as Akkadian and Ugaritic) or are languages used only in religious spheres (Syriac and Classical Hebrew). Despite this, Bennett's work gives students a tool for enriching their knowledge of the development and history of Semitic languages.

Book Review

A course in language teaching: Practice and theory. Penny Ur. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. Pp: xi., 375.

ROBERT JOHANSON

The purpose of this textbook is twofold: to serve as a text for a pre-service foreign language teacher course and to provide a resource for both novice and experienced foreign language teachers. The seven major sections and 22 "modules" in this text do an impressive job of covering almost every aspect of what a pre-service teacher might need to know in addition to information about teaching foreign language. Topics range from the language related (What difference does age make to language learning?) to the mechanics of running a classroom (What is a syllabus?). Considering the enormity of the task and the fact that the work is under 400 pages long, Ur is to be commended for providing the language teaching profession with such a complete and comprehensive textbook.

One of the most outstanding qualities of this text is its user-friendliness. Ur's conversational writing style is so personal and easy to read that it seems as if she is dictating it to a group of novice language teachers in the teachers' lounge between classes. Obviously aware that readers may be overcome by the large quantity of information in the text, Ur warns in an introductory section entitled Read this First: "Do not try to read it all!" (p. xi). She devotes considerable space to instructing her prospective readers on how to maximize the potential of the text. She does this by crafting a comprehensive introduction that describes the layout of the text and gives suggestions on how to use it. Moreover, it includes a 37-page section entitled "Trainer's Notes," which not only summarizes the major ideas of the modules but also suggests how much time trainers should spend on each section.

What makes the book user-friendly, however, is Ur's organization of the text. Whereas many teacher-training textbooks tend to be pedantic, this text is streamlined, which facilitates its use as a resource. The modules are divided into subunits consisting of a task, question, and inquiry and are designed to be used independently of one another. This helps fulfill both roles as a textbook and a reference.

Another appealing feature of Ur's work is the manner in which she skillfully and objectively integrates the pedagogical research theories supporting her suggestions with practice. Ur introduces each of the seven major parts of the book with a one-page

section serving as an advance organizer to update her readers with recent trends in the research literature. Unlike other texts that tend to present mainly the views espoused by the author, Ur introduces different viewpoints and lets the readers decide their value. Following these advance organizers and each of the modules, Ur includes a bibliographical section entitled "Further Reading."

Paradoxically, the strength of this volume may also be its weakness. While Ur is to be lauded for being consistent in her bare bones approach to presenting a large amount of information in a relatively small amount of space, the ultra-condensed format of the text makes it a deceptively easy read. Faced with such a large amount of information in a relatively short length, the reader is forced to fill in the gaps on his or her own. Worse, the brevity of the materials in the text causes readers to run the risk of gaining only a superficial understanding of the concepts brought up unless they consult the bibliographical works cited at the end of each module. This potential risk could be removed if the teacher-trainer provided supplementary readings. Another difficulty with the text is that, while it is beneficial that each module can be used independently, this independence gives the text a disjointed quality that makes it seem as if the author simply sat down at her word processor and wrote each section in isolation. However, Ur does include advance organizers and bold print to make it easy to see the transitions between topics.

Although it takes some time for the reader to become accustomed to the format of the text and how to use it effectively, this text offers a great deal for a relatively low cost. With its sound pedagogical foundation and superb organization, it can be a valuable tool for beginning and experienced foreign language instructors alike, regardless of the language they may teach. *A Course in Language Teaching* lives up to the already high standards of the works produced by the Cambridge University Press and may even raise them.

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